

# Executive Summary

The City's vision for Seattle's North Downtown calls for the area's transformation into a high-intensity district including one of the nation's leading biotech research centers, office complexes, diverse urban neighborhoods, and supporting commercial activities. With Lake Union on the north and the Westlake Center/Downtown Core on the south, the district will provide excellent civic amenities and a lively setting for urban life. Parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities will be a fundamental part of this vision, and the City must plan a comprehensive and strategic approach to providing these facilities if the vision is to be fully realized. (Figure 1.)

The North Downtown area currently includes 20.8 acres of open space in three public parks – all of which are north of Denny Way. Despite these substantial resources, the North Downtown area will need approximately 8 additional acres of open space to meet Parks & Recreation's Plan 2000 (hereafter called Park Plan 2000) goals per projected population and employment figures for 2025. Denny Triangle maintains a current open space deficit of 0.9 acres which is expected to grow to 10.2 acres by 2025. More importantly, new residents and workers will need a wider variety of park and recreational facilities in the future. After the privately owned Denny Playfield is converted to private development, the planning area will no longer include an active playfield.

Based on Park Plan 2000 goals, participant input, and park and recreational facility research, this plan identifies park and recreational facility goals and priorities for each of the subareas within the North Downtown area. These needs are translated into a set of priorities for land acquisition, guidelines for facility development, and an integrated implementation strategy.

## Implementation Strategy

Achieving the City's park, open space, and recreation facility goals will not be easy. High land prices and development activity complicate site acquisition, and Parks & Recreation has very limited funds for construction. Therefore, the City must:

- Identify specific priorities for open space and recreational facilities within the subareas of North Downtown as a guide for private and public development.
- Optimize use of current park resources.
- Take advantage of acquisition opportunities as they arise and be creative in combining different park activities on a single site.
- Effectively integrate open space into other public and private developments and combine assets derived from regulatory and bonus programs.
- Improve streets and trails to link parks and to provide open space in their own right.
- Work with private property owners to achieve both public open space and private development goals.

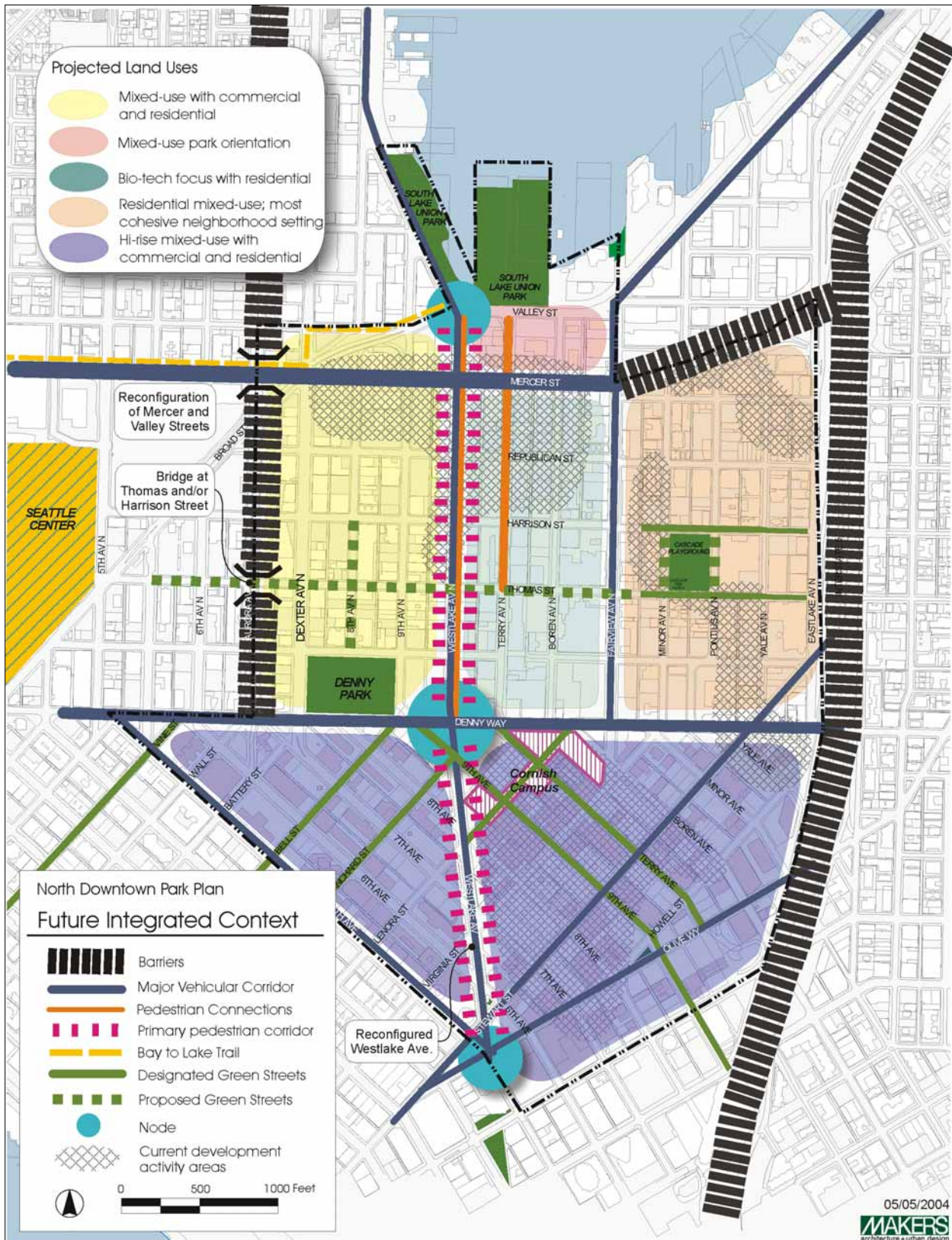


Figure 1. Future Integrated Context for the North Downtown Area.

In keeping with these directions, the plan recommends an implementation strategy integrating the following activities:

- A. Prioritizing Park and Recreation Facility Needs
- B. Acquisition and Development Strategies
- C. Development Regulation and Incentive Programs
- D. City Wide Coordination for Open Space Achievement

Below are summarized the most important recommendations for each activity. (Figure 2.)

#### A. Prioritizing Park and Recreational Facility Needs

- **Establish priorities and comprehensive guidelines for the location and design of parks and for open spaces achieved through regulatory and incentive programs.** The plan contains model guidelines that can be incorporated into acquisition efforts, director's rules, and staff procedures in administering the various programs.

The prioritization shown in the map, along with accompanying guidelines contained in the plan, will help Parks & Recreation staff evaluate prospective sites for acquisition and allocate funds for specific park development. It will also guide City staff in directing developers to provide open space as part of City regulatory or development bonus requirements.

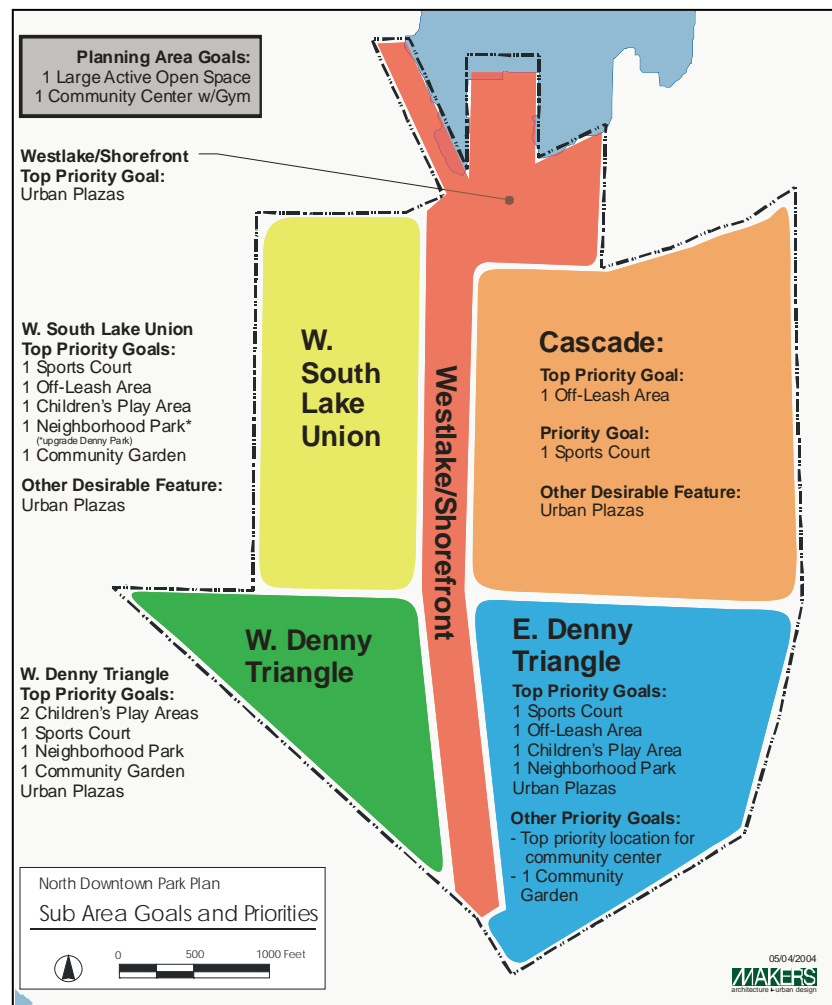


Figure 2. Goals and Priorities for Each of the Subareas.

## B. Acquisition and Development

- **Establish a dedicated fund for substantial park acquisition and development to which funds from incentive programs, grants, gifts, and other sources can be added.** A dedicated account would be invaluable in taking advantage of acquisition opportunities that arise.
- **Continue to seek opportunities to acquire and develop high priority facilities, especially in East Denny Triangle.**
- **Explore opportunities to incorporate park elements into other civic properties and projects,** including the proposed Denny Triangle Substation, Seattle Department of Transportation's Broad Street maintenance site, Westlake Avenue/streetcar improvements, and King County's Convention Place redevelopment.
- **Increase Denny Park's recreational activities** with new facilities, such as a plaza and/or children's' playground, and remodel the current building into community center space. Enhance its open space qualities with appropriate landscaping and amenities.
- **Pursue opportunities to acquire a large active own space.**

## C. Development Regulation and Incentive Programs

- **Coordinate the various regulatory and incentive programs to achieve open space objectives,** including the Code open space requirements, County Transfer of Development Credits (TDC), City Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), fee-in-lieu, street and alley vacation, and development bonus programs. This may be done as part of the Center City Project.
- **Engage developers to meet both City and private open space objectives.** Adjust regulatory and incentive programs to encourage coordinated open space development and coordinated public/private improvements for mutual benefit.
- **Adjust individual regulatory and incentive programs to support the above efforts.** The plan includes a number of recommendations for specific programs.

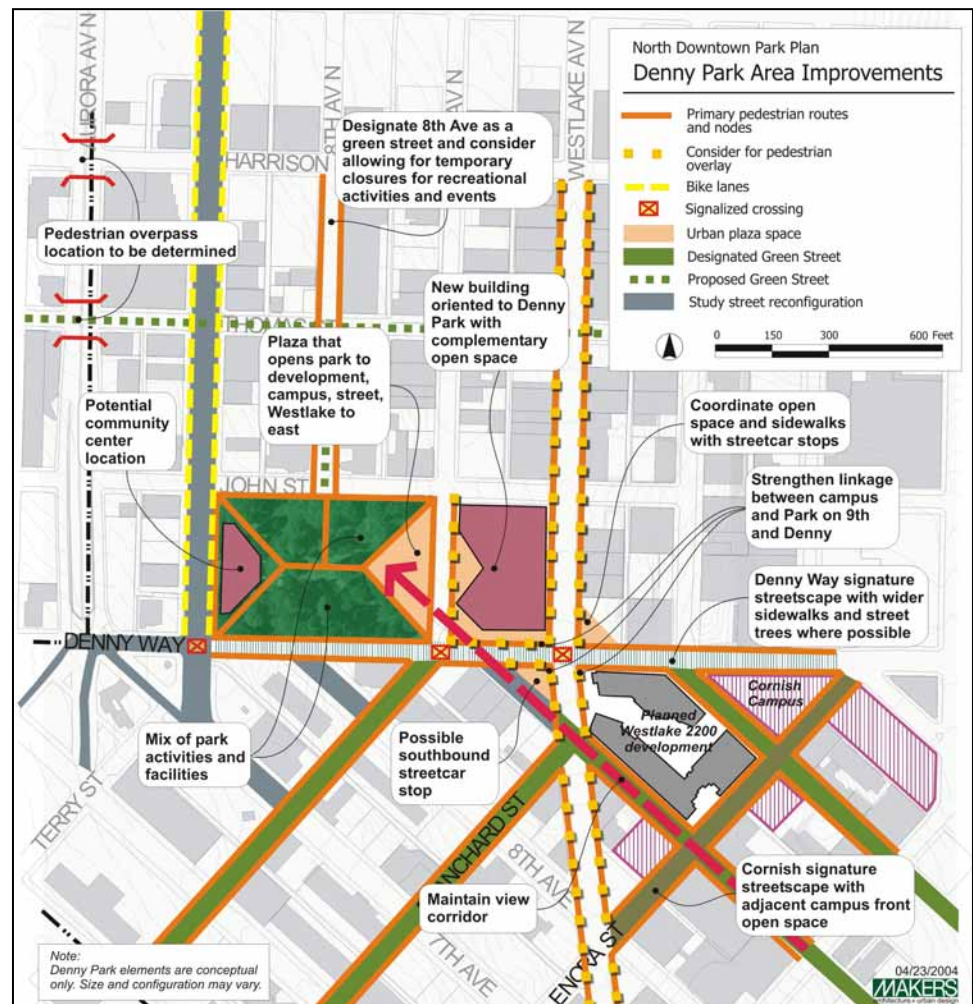
## D. Interdepartmental Activities That Will Enhance Parks and Open Space

- **Add open space improvements at key transit (bus, streetcar, and monorail) stops.**
- **Define and implement design concepts for Green Streets in North Downtown.** The Green Street program, which envisions designated streets to act as linear open spaces that focus neighborhood activity and identity, is an important part of North Downtown's redevelopment. However, the program has not been actively pursued and there is not a common understanding of either the desired physical characteristics of the individual streets or the implementation tools necessary to construct improvements. Concept plans for individual streets would identify what improvements should be made in conjunction with private development and provide a starting point for comprehensive implementation. The City should consider constructing one Green Street as a demonstration project.
- **Ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle connections from South Lake Union Park to the Dexter Avenue N bicycle lanes.** As the City upgrades the area's streets, continue to ensure that safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections are made.



- **Implement key bicycle and pedestrian trail improvements**, such as the Bay to Lake Trail and the Aurora overpass to the Seattle Center.
- **Initiate cooperative funding of key street improvements.** Since streetscapes will be critically important to enhance new development, the City should explore ways for cooperative funding such as a Local Improvement District (LID). By contributing to an LID, a developer could be assured that the utilities and street improvements will be adequate to support new activities. Such cooperative projects are often a less expensive way to upgrade a street than through piecemeal construction on isolated segments.
- **Prepare and implement an urban design plan for the Denny/Westlake area that integrates streets, plazas, Denny Park, Cornish Campus, the streetcar and other redevelopment projects.** The Denny/Westlake “Node” lies at the heart of the area and, for a number of reasons, is pivotal to unifying and providing an identity for Seattle’s North Downtown. The plan includes an urban design concept that identifies opportunities for improving connections, creating useful open spaces, reconfiguring underutilized streets, improving streetscapes and enhancing redevelopment potential. This concept will greatly enhance Denny Park improvements and should be refined and incorporated into relevant City efforts. (Figure 3.)

Figure 3.  
Improvement  
Concept for the  
Denny/Westlake  
Node.



## Summary

This Park and Recreation Plan for North Downtown Seattle, as summarized by the recommendations above and Figure 4 at right, is not a traditional parks and open space plan with an extensive list of specific projects tied to an overarching spatial concept. Rather, it is an integrated system of efforts to achieve identified goals for the area. Although this plan defines the open space and recreation objectives for the area and recommends methods to achieve those objectives, it does not always identify the specific locations and design features of individual facilities.

This approach reflects the modest resources currently available for park development and the challenges of acquiring land in a rapidly developing area. Because of these limitations, many of the recommendations include measures to better utilize existing assets, add to current resources, identify highest priorities, and to take advantage of unique opportunities as they arise.

More importantly, the plan responds to the fact that the City is undertaking a broad spectrum of regulatory, programmatic, and public improvement efforts that will transform the North Downtown. Therefore, the plan focuses on measures to support and “leverage” those broader activities. Because these City activities, such as the Westlake reconstruction, the streetcar, County/City Transfer of Development Credits program, Seattle Department of Transportation planning, and the Green Streets program, are still in a state of flux, park and open space opportunities are not completely defined at present. The success of North Downtown improvement efforts will depend, in large measure, on Parks & Recreation continuing to pursue this plan’s recommendations in conjunction with other inter-departmental efforts.

Additionally, since the area’s ultimate character will depend on the actions of large property owners, the plan includes measures to facilitate coordinated public/private efforts to satisfy open space and recreational needs. The plan also recognizes that the parks and recreation needs of the North Downtown community will change over time. Given the dynamic nature of the City’s vision, and the extent of projected redevelopment, any plans for the area must remain flexible. Parks & Recreation should periodically monitor conditions in the North Downtown, update this plan and redirect efforts as appropriate.

Great cities (and great communities within great cities) are achieved by aggressively pursuing a compelling vision through a broad array of coordinated actions over time. Seattle has a compelling vision for its North Downtown based on the economic strength of the emerging bio-tech industry and the opportunity to build a dynamic and diverse community in a high-amenity setting. This plan proposes a number of actions that will, in combination with other public and private efforts, achieve that vision.



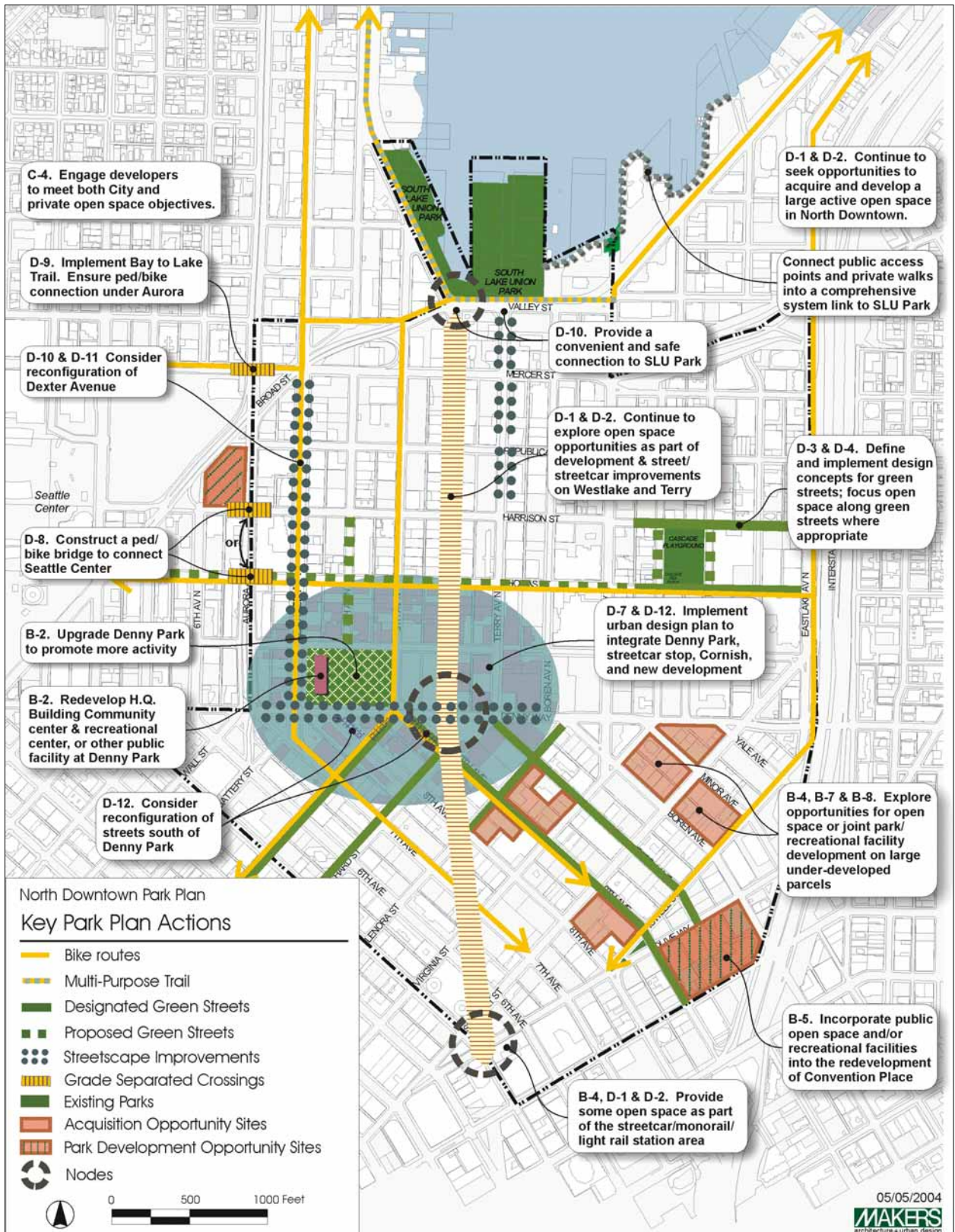


Figure 4. North Downtown Park Plan Concept.